

# Program Quality Assessment (PQA)

*Infant-Toddler*

# Week 3 Learning Unit

*Learning Environment and  
Schedules and Routines*



# Section I: Learning Environment

This section evaluates the following:

- Safe and healthy environment
- Spaces for sleeping, eating, and bodily care
- Spaces for play and movement
- Assessable sensory materials
- Children's photos, creations
- Accessible, safe outdoor space

## Completing the Learning Environment Section

Children do not have to be present when you collect most of the evidence (see **I-A — Row 5** for an exception) for this section.

In addition to lists and anecdotes, photographs can provide useful evidence for this section.

The following pages will show you some examples of photo evidence.

## Section I: Learning Environment (continued)

### Example

These photos show an example of a posted handwashing sequence in the bodily care area and could be used as evidence for Item I-A, Row 6.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

## Section I: Learning Environment (continued)

### Example

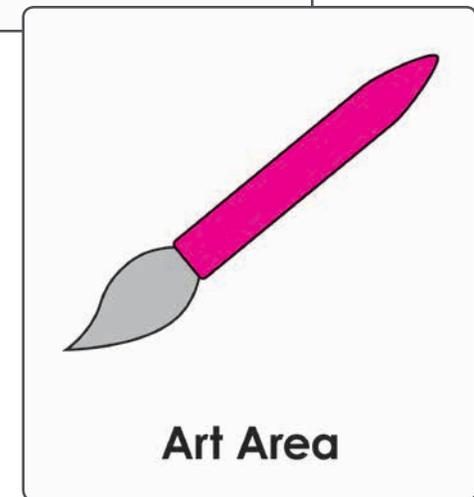
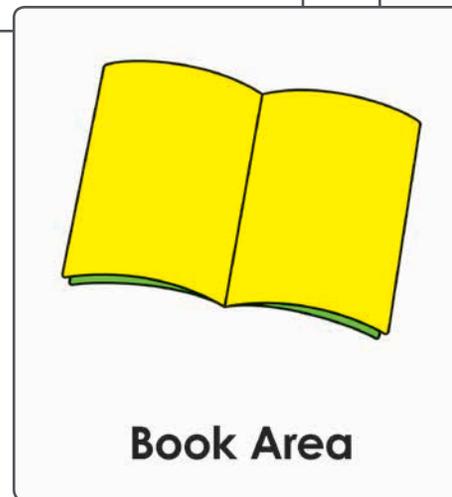
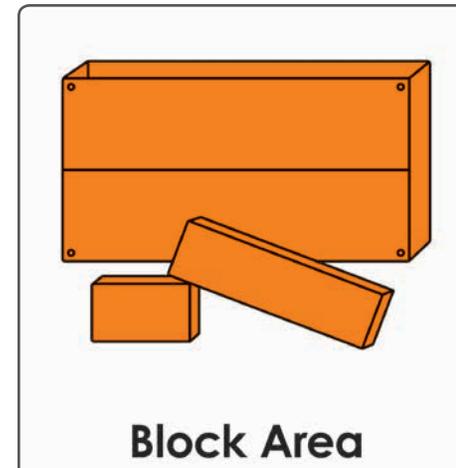
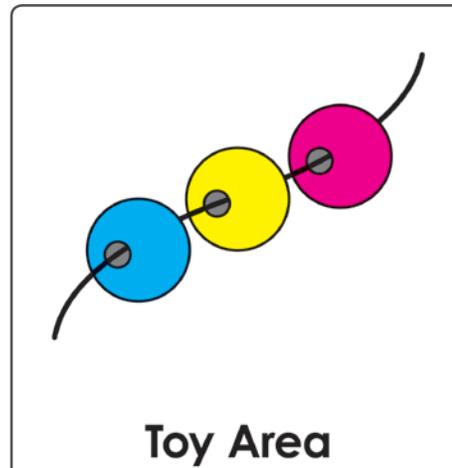
These photos show metal strainers, metal pans, wooden spoons, metal keys, wood blocks, metal rings, etc. It could be used as part of the evidence for Item I-D — Row 1.



## Section I: Learning Environment (continued)

### Example

These are examples of interest area names and signs (labels) that would be easily understood by children. These examples could be used for Item I-C — Row 6 (mixed-age and toddler rooms only.)



## Section I: Learning Environment (continued)

### Helpful Hints for Completing the Learning Environment Section

Remember to ask the *Clarifying Questions* in Items **I-A**, **I-B**, **I-D**, and **I-F**.

Remember to read the *Notes* in both **Items I-A** and **I-C** in the Supporting Evidence/Anecdote space.

For **Items I-A** and **I-F**, you'll need to know the square footage of the classroom space. The director or the maintenance staff may be a good source for interior and exterior measurements if the caregivers do not know. You can also estimate by doing one of the following: if the classroom has square ceiling tiles, they are generally 1 foot squares, or, measure your stride and “walk it out” for a close approximation.

I. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT			
I-A. (continued)			
	Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators
Row 6	<input type="checkbox"/> There are no posted hand-washing procedures. <b>Examples:</b> - Nothing is posted in bathroom or changing area to let children and adults know of hand-washing procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Written hand-washing procedures are posted. <b>Examples:</b> - Only written procedures are posted for adults, mixed-aged children, and toddlers. - Procedures are posted only for adults.	<input type="checkbox"/> Hand-washing procedures are visibly posted and easily understood by toddlers in room. <b>Examples:</b> - Pictorial procedures posted down low in the bathroom for toddlers. - Written and/or pictorial procedures posted for adults by hand-washing areas — kitchen, bathroom, changing area.
Row 7	<input type="checkbox"/> There are unsafe and unsanitary sleeping conditions. <b>Examples:</b> - Stuffed animals and toys in cribs. - Stained or smelly blankets, pillows, sheets. - Shared bedding and/or bedding stored together.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping conditions are safe and sometimes sanitary. <b>Examples:</b> - Nothing in cribs with children. - Soiled bedding not washed immediately. - Children's bedding stored together. - Cots stacked with bedding hanging out and touching others' bedding.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping conditions are safe and sanitary, with well-kept bedding. <b>Examples:</b> - Nothing in cribs with children. - Bedding cleaned weekly and each set used by only one child. - Individual children's bedding stored separately, not touching or hanging over others' bedding on cots or in cubbies.
Row 8	<input type="checkbox"/> There are no accessible first-aid supplies and/or procedures. <b>Examples:</b> - Supplies kept in main office. - Caregivers unaware of children's special/medical needs, allergies not posted. - CPR and choking procedures stored in main office.	<input type="checkbox"/> There are some accessible first-aid supplies and procedures. <b>Examples:</b> - Supplies/procedures locked in cabinet or unmarked in room. - Lead caregiver aware of special/medical needs of children. - CPR and choking procedures in room but not posted. - First-aid kit not appropriately stocked.	<input type="checkbox"/> First-aid supplies are marked and easily accessible; procedures are visibly posted. <b>Examples:</b> - Well-marked first-aid kit is visible in room and appropriately stocked for different emergencies. - Primary caregivers and subs are well trained and aware of special/medical needs of children. Allergies are visibly posted; CPR and choking procedures are posted.

**Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes**

Note: In an infant-only room, check level 5 if hand-washing procedures are posted only for adults. (Posted hand-washing procedures are needed for older children but not for infants.)

CQ: What is your procedure for storing and sanitizing bedding and sleeping surfaces?

CQ: Do you have a first aid kit? Where is it located?

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For items **I-C** and **I-D**, there are rows specific to mixed-age and toddler classrooms. (These will be marked “N/A” for infant-only rooms.)

## Section I: Learning Environment (continued)

### More Helpful Hints

#### Other rows that might not apply to all settings:

- Item B — Row 5 (p. 7) will not apply to programs in which all food is prepared and delivered to the rooms. If this is the case, select “N/A” for this row.
- Item F — Row 6 (p. 24) will not apply to programs with no swings, climbers, or other gross-motor equipment on the playground. If this is the case, select “N/A” for this row.
- Item I-C — Row 2 (p. 8) is requesting information on soft **spaces** such as a cozy nook with pillows, bean bag chairs, or a large mattress to climb on.
- Item I-D — Row 5 (p. 14) is requesting information on soft **materials** such as blankets, foam blocks, cloth blocks, stuffed animals, or soft toys.

## Section I: Learning Environment (continued)

### Item I-D — Row 9 (Mixed-age and toddler rooms only)

Look for materials that reflect the **home and community cultures and differing abilities** of the children in the program. These might include the following things:

- Work clothing from the community
- Eyeglasses, canes
- Cooking utensils
- Empty food containers from children's homes
- Family photographs
- Music, musical instruments
- Bus or taxi vehicles for an urban classroom, tractors for a rural classroom
- Books representing people with special needs as well as differing cultures



As you observe in classrooms, what are you noticing about how families' cultures are represented in the classroom? How are gender, race, roles, occupations, age, cultural backgrounds, and special needs depicted in classroom materials and in the environment that you observe?

## Section I: Learning Environment (continued)

### Classroom Diagram, p. 21

The drawing of the classroom should include the following:

- All doors (mark the way the doors open) and windows
- Bathrooms and sinks
- Cribs or resting areas (if applicable)
- Shelves (and the way the shelves face)
- Furniture — adult-sized and child-sized
- Interest areas and what they are named

(*Note:* See slide 18 in the Week 1 Learning Unit for a sample diagram.)

### Outdoor Space Diagram, p. 25

The drawing of the outside space should include the following:

- Access to the building and playground exits
- Fixed structures for climbing, swinging, sliding, etc.
- Storage spaces for portable materials
- Surfacing (grass, pavement, rubber, woodchips, etc.)
- Shade vs. areas of direct sunlight
- Barriers between play space and traffic

## Section II: Schedules and Routines

This section evaluates the following:

- Flexible, predictable schedule
- Comfortable arrivals/departures
- Child-initiated choice times
- Bodily care choices
- Smooth transitions
- Child-centered feedings/meals
- Fluid, dynamic group times
- Nature-based outside times
- Individualized naptimes



As you observe the daily routine, how are you noticing that family beliefs and practices are respected and incorporated in the care and learning of children?

## Section II: Schedules and Routines (continued)

### Getting Started on Schedules and Routines

Before the children arrive, copy the posted daily routine (p. 48), then “flag” it by folding the corner over or using a sticky note. As the day progresses, fill out the routine as it actually occurs.

Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the classroom’s daily routine (the order in which the parts of the routine occur) because once the children arrive, you will be busy!

You may find it useful to flag item **II-E — Transitions**, since you will need multiple examples throughout the day for your evidence.

In this section, for **Items II-C, II-G and II-H — Row 1**, simply determine whether or not the program does that part of the daily routine. If it does not, go directly to the item score at the top of the page and score the item a 1. (See the note under the item description with this direction.)

Remember to look for notes that indicate a row only applies to a specific age group. (Refer to page *x* for age-group specifications.)

## Section II: Schedules and Routines (continued)

### What to Look Out for in the Schedules and Routines Section

#### Item II-A — Row 2 (p. 27)

Look for a posted schedule for parents to review and a pictorial routine posted low enough for older infants and toddlers to see.

(Note: In an infant-only room, check Level 5 if the schedule is posted for parents. A pictorial routine is not necessary for infants.)

Daily Routine at a Glance	
7:00–7:50 a.m.	Arrival
7:50–8:00 a.m.	Wash hands/eat
8:00–8:30 a.m.	Choice time
8:30–9:00 a.m.	Diaper changes and choice time
9:00–9:45 a.m.	Outside time
9:45–10:15 a.m.	Coming inside/small group
10:15–10:30 a.m.	Choice time
10:30–10:45 a.m.	Song time
10:45–11:10 a.m.	Wash hands/eat lunch
11:10–11:30 a.m.	Diaper changes and choice time
11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.	Naptime/quiet activity for early risers
2:30–3:00 p.m.	Choice time
3:00–3:15 p.m.	Snack
3:15–4:00 p.m.	Outside time
4:00–5:30 p.m.	Cleanup and Choice time

*Example of a routine posted for parents*

*Example of a daily routine that a child can see*



## Section II: Schedules and Routines (continued)

### What to Look Out for in the Schedules and Routines Section

#### Item II-A — Row 5 (p. 29)

Children should spend **less than 75 minutes total** per day in infant seating (e.g., bouncy chairs, Exersaucers®, swings, high chairs, walkers, playpens, cribs).

This is an example but needs to be observed in order to ensure infants and nonmobile children are not confined but allowed to explore freely with their bodies on the floor in a safe space.



As you observe, what are you noticing about how all children are included in opportunities for making choices?

## Section II: Schedules and Routines (continued)

### What to Look Out for in the Daily Routine Section

#### Item II-C — Row 2 (p. 19)

- **Score 1** if children can **only** do the preset activities that are set out.
- **Score 3** if children **sometimes** choose other materials instead of doing the preset activities.
- **Score 5** if children **always** make choices and follow their own plans.

### II. SCHEDULES AND ROUTINES

Circle one indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page ix.

II-C. Choice times (play times, awake times) focus on child-initiated exploration and play.

1 2 3 4 5

Check here if not observed or reported.

	Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
Row 1	<input type="checkbox"/> There is no daily choice or play time for children, or choice time lasts all day. <b>Examples:</b> - For most of day, infants sit in Exersaucers, bouncy seats, and swings, and toddlers sit at tables. - Choice time is all day, and children wander and conflicts arise because nothing else is scheduled.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes choice or play time is a part of the day for children, and/or choice time is too brief or too long. <b>Examples:</b> - Infants are confined to swings and seats during choice time. - Choice time is posted on the schedule but not carried out. - Toddler choice time is too brief (15–20 minutes) or too long (children get restless and conflicts arise).	<input type="checkbox"/> Choice or play time is always a part of the day for children, and children's actions determine the length of choice time. <b>Examples:</b> - Infants are engaged with caregivers or a variety of materials during awake times. - Choice time allows toddlers to engage in pretend play. - Caregivers end choice time early when children lose interest or begin wandering.	Note: If level 1 is checked, score a 1 and leave the remaining rows blank.
Row 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Children make no choices during choice/play time. <b>Examples:</b> - Children are confined in playpens, swings, bouncy seats. - Children mainly respond to or carry out adult-initiated activities such as teacher-planned projects or activities at the art table, block area, and/or toy table. - Children watch television and/or videos.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children make some choices during choice/play time. <b>Examples:</b> - At some point during choice time each child participates in a planned art activity. - Only some areas are available — no sand or water. - A toddler wants the markers but the caregiver tells him, "Not today." - Sometimes infants are placed in a seat when they could be placed on the floor to freely move their bodies and explore materials laid near them.	<input type="checkbox"/> Children make many choices and carry out their own exploration and play initiatives during choice/play time; they decide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What to explore or play with</li> <li>• How to explore or play</li> <li>• Where to explore and play (all areas available)</li> <li>• How to move</li> </ul> <b>Examples:</b> - Mobile and nonmobile infants are given a variety of materials to explore and play with. - While sitting beside her caregiver, Yolanda (an infant) chooses different items from her treasure basket to mouth — a bottle brush, large shell, wooden spoon, tin can. - Children pull materials off the shelf and use them in their own ways. - Toddlers Mariah and Eva play with dolls in the house area while Tyler and Mario use cars in the block area. - Older toddlers follow through on their plans.	Today, the teachers had a "Father's Day" project to do in the art area. All the children were required to complete the Father's Day project, but if it was not their turn, they were allowed to free play in the other areas. However, when it was their turn to do a project, they had to stop what they were doing.  T: "Jessica, there's space for you to do your Father's Day project now. You can go back to the house area when you are finished."

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## Section II: Schedules and Routines (continued)

### What to Look Out For in the Daily Routine Section

#### Item II-E — Row 4 (p. 37)

- During cleanup time, children and adults work together.
- Adults allow time for children to clean up and comment on their efforts.
- Unless something presents a health or safety hazard, adults do not “redo” children’s cleanup efforts.
- Once the children are napping or leave for the day, it is permissible for the adults to do more thorough straightening as well as “deep” cleaning (e.g., vacuuming, spraying disinfectant on the table).
- This row applies only to mixed-age and toddler rooms.

#### Item II-H (p. 43–45)

- Look at the note at the top of the page (under the item description).
  - Even if the program has a gym or “gross-motor room,” children must go outside **every day**, if weather permits.
  - If weather or safety conditions do not allow for outside time, check “not observed or reported.”

# A Peek Ahead

## This week you will

- Learn about Section I: Learning Environment.
- Learn about Section II: Schedules and Routines.

## Next week you will

- Learn more about Section III: Adult-Child Interaction.
- Learn more about Section IV: Curriculum Planning and Child Observation.

